Four Months in North America.

FOUR MONTHS IN NORTH AMERICA.

BY WILLIAM HENRY CHARLTON.

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PREFACE.

The greater part of the following pages originally appeared in five letters, addressed to the *Hexham Courant* newspaper, during my stay last winter in America. The whole has since been re-written, with many alterations and additions. Having, from my boyhood, taken a keen interest in all that regarded the North American Continent, and especially the great Republic within its limits, I may, perhaps, without vanity, believe that when, at a period beyond that of middle age, I approached its shores on a first, and probably a last visit, I had more knowledge of it than the majority of my fellow-countrymen.

I have endeavoured to tell honestly what I saw and heard, without seeking to flatter any of the prejudices, social or political, which may be found on either side of the Atlantic.

W. H. CHARLTON.

Hesleyside, Northumberland, November, 1873.

I.

It was late in the afternoon of Saturday, the 28th of September, 1872, that our party of three persons embarked at Liverpool, in the Cunard Steamer “Russia,” for New York. The weather, true to its almost continuous character for nine months previously, was rainy and stormy, and I believe the “Russia” was the only vessel which left the Mersey that evening. After a rough night the wind moderated, and at daybreak the coast of Ireland was visible. At 4 p.m. on Sunday, we lay-to off Queenstown to receive the mails, when we had an opportunity of admiring the fine harbour, and also of realising, through an opera-glass, the unpleasant fact that nearly all the corn appeared to be still in the fields, and that much of it was even uncut. It was late that night before we lost sight of the last Irish lighthouse, near Cape Clear, and on the following morning the “Russia” was making her way against a head wind, across the waters of the broad Atlantic. We had nearly 200 passengers on board (none in the steerage), and 2 our party at the captain's table was a decidedly agreeable one, including, as it did, a learned professor, well known for his rambles amongst the Alps; a celebrated historian, who some years since propounded a new and startling view of the character of our King Henry VIII., and who has subsequently given a series of lectures in New York, Boston, &c., with the view of enlightening the citizens of the United States as to the true state of the relations between Great Britain and Ireland; and lastly a Scottish nobleman, well known as a good sportsman and a fearless rider, but who was now bound for Colorado, nearly 2000 miles in the interior of the North American Continent, to ascertain from personal observation, the truth respecting certain gold mines, for the working of which a company had lately been formed in London.*

* Note.—There will probably be no indiscretion in mentioning in connection with the above paragraph, the names of Professor Tyndall, Mr. James Anthony Froude, and the Marquis of Queensberry.

The weather, though not absolutely stormy, was such as to confine the greater part of the passengers, nine-tenths of whom were Americans, to their berths till the following Sunday, when daylight showed us the coast of Newfoundland, 3 which we were told is not often to be seen on account of the fogs which prevail on the banks, and of which we had experienced a slight specimen for some hours on the previous day. We saw no ice during the voyage, but I believe it is very uncommon at this season; the same thing, however, took place on our return voyage to Europe in February, but at that time our course was along a lower latitude than that followed by the “Russia.”

The outline of Newfoundland struck me as strongly resembling that of the Irish coast we had last seen. The weather was very clear, the sea had moderated, and all things looked more cheerful on board. On the succeeding Monday and Tuesday we again lost sight of land, but early on Wednesday morning the highlands of New Jersey were in sight, and the decks were soon crowded with excited Americans, eager to point out to the stranger the beauties of their native land. These said highlands are nothing more than a ridge of hills 300 or 400 feet in height, and mostly covered with wood, some of the trees of which already exhibited the brilliant hues of an American autumn. The entrance to New 4 York Bay reminded me a good deal of the Isle of Wight and Southampton water. We were detained more than an hour off Staten Island (which is pretty, and covered with villas), by quarantine regulations, and finally reached our dock in Jersey City, on the west side of the Hudson or North River, about 11 a.m., where I had the pleasure of being welcomed by my son, and the amusement of being a witness to the “interviewing” of our professor and our historian in the *national* style, which has been fully and accurately described by Dickens in his “American Notes.” The result of this “interviewing” was, of course, a minute personal description of the above two eminent individuals in the *New York Herald* of next morning!

The docks of Jersey City and New York are disgracefully bad, and form a striking contrast to those of Liverpool. After passing our baggage through the Custom House, a rather tedious operation, as Protectionist duties are stringent enough in this so-called “land of

liberty," we drove into the steam-ferry, which is in reality a flying bridge, and were speedily across the Hudson, and deposited at the 5 Brevoort House in Fifth Avenue, a large hotel conducted in what is here termed the European style; the usual plan in America being for each guest to pay a fixed sum daily for his board and lodging, and this whether he takes his meals in the house or not. The Brevoort House, though very expensive, enjoys deservedly the reputation of having the best *cuisine* in the United States, and is, moreover, much quieter than most of the great hotels in the city.

New York has been called the most American city in the United States. I can only say, that one moment I was reminded of England, and in the next of France. The private houses are, however, almost all built in the English style, with the differences of the front door being reached from the street by a flight of eight or ten steps, and that of the drawing and dining rooms being almost invariably on the ground floor, and opening into one another.

The afternoon being fine, we took a drive round the Central Park, a space of about one thousand acres, in what will probably, by the end of this century, be the middle of the city of 6 New York. The park has been laid out with great skill in landscape gardening, the artist having ably availed himself of the natural rock which comes frequently to the surface, and created one or two beautiful sheets of water. The trees, from not having been planted more than twenty years, are still rather small; but the park is kept in admirable order, and intersected by excellent roads and walks, while the roadway of most of the streets of New York, and indeed of most of the American and Canadian cities that I have seen, is execrable and filthy. I could not help remarking the lightness and elegance of the American carriages of all descriptions, and cannot understand why we in England have never adopted a style of carriage building, which seems to be as strong as ours, and would certainly be the saving of a great deal of useless labour to our horses. After a stay of two days in New York, and having experienced a specimen of its climate, the thermometer having fallen nearly thirty degrees in the space of four or five hours, and the weather having become bitterly cold, we intended to avail ourselves of the steamer to ascend the Hudson for one hundred miles, to the 7 residence of Mr. L—, whose hospitable

invitation to pass a few days with him we had accepted. To our great surprise, however, we found that the steamer had made its last trip for the season on the previous day, October 10th, so that nothing was left but to take the railroad, which follows the east bank of the river pretty closely all the way. Mr L—kindly accompanied us, and pointed out the many objects of interest, both historical and picturesque, through which we travelled. It is difficult to speak in too high terms of the beauties of the majestic Hudson. Some idea of it may be formed if we could imagine our Lake of Windermere to be one hundred miles long, and bordered at two or three points by higher mountains than those it possesses; these American mountains being generally covered with wood to their very tops. The Hudson, up to Albany, one hundred and fifty miles from New York, varies from four miles to one in width, is generally deep, and enlivened by the white sails of the most graceful craft I ever saw. At about forty miles from New York we passed the celebrated military academy of West Point, which is on the west side of the river, and is reached 8 by a ferry. The situation is so grand and beautiful that I could not help agreeing with Mr Anthony Trollope in thinking it apity that it should be monopolized by a military school and a *temperance* hotel. At Tivoli depot(pronounced “deepo,” such being the name given to all railway stations in the States and Canada), we left the train and soon reached the house of Mr L —, which is beautifully situated some hundred feet above the river, and nearly opposite the noble Catskill mountains, the locality in which Washington Irving has placed his well-known story of Rip Van Winkle.

When I say that our reception was of the most cordial and hospitable description, I need only add that our host and his charming family were Americans, and among the few remaining representatives of the old landed aristocracy of the State of New York.

The woods here were in all their autumnal beauty, which was astonishing to our European eyes, though we were told that the abundance of rain, and the absence of frost, had rendered the colours of the “Fall” less bright than usual. But, however that may have been, such 9 deep scarlet, bright orange, rich brown, bronze, &c., among the fading leaves I never saw before. It was rather strange, however, to hear our kind friends, who were living

in the latitude of Southern Italy, talking at this season, of nightly frosts, and anticipating the possible speedy destruction of their heliotropes and dahlias! On October 16th, we took a regretful leave of Mr L—and his family, and proceeded by train, *vi*# Albany, to Niagara Falls, a village on the American side of the mighty cataract.

Our route lay at first, as before, on the left bank of the Hudson, till we reached Albany, a rather quaint-looking town, and the capital of the State of New York. Here we crossed the river by a long bridge, and entered the valley of the Mohawk, some parts of which strongly reminded my fellow-travellers and myself of the Tyne in the neighbourhood of Hexham. The nomenclature of stations on the line was most amusing, “Rome,” “Utica” and “Syracuse,” being mixed up with “Oneida,” “Onondaga,” and “Chittenango,” the last three being names of Indian origin. The Erie Canal made about fifty years ago, before the 10 days of railroads, and remarkable as the first attempt to place the vast districts around the Great Lakes in easy communication with the Eastern States of the Union, was visible for many miles on our left, on the opposite bank of the Mohawk river.

After a rather tedious journey of three hundred and fifty miles in fourteen hours, which is, I believe, rather above the average rate of speed of an American *express* train, we reached Cataract House, and rushed down to see the rapids, by the light of a moon as bright as that of Italy. It was a glorious sight, and only less impressive than that of the great Falls themselves, which we thoroughly inspected on the following day, when we drove along the banks of the Niagara river as far as the whirlpool, then returned and crossed the suspension bridge to Clifton House on the Canada side, went behind the Horse Shoe Fall to Termination Rock, (an adventure unattended by any danger except that of a wetting, against which you are protected by a waterproof suit); and finally rambled about the beautiful Goat Island, a visit to which is really worth the 50 cents—2s. per head—which is demanded at the bridge, 11 built across the rapids, and connecting the island with the village of the Falls. On the following morning, the 17th, my son left us to return to his duties at Washington, and we took the railway to Lewiston, near the mouth of the Niagara river, and opposite to Queenstown, where, in the war of sixty years since, General Brock

inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Americans who had invaded Canada at that point. Brock himself fell in the battle, but the whole American army which had crossed the river (for incredible as it may seem, the New York Militia *refused* to do so, on the plea that they were not bound to serve out of their State!!)* were forced to surrender as prisoners of war. Brock's *second* monument, the *first* having been blown up by a contemptible scoundrel in 1840, rises in the shape of a tall and handsome column on the heights, and may be seen from a distance of many miles.

* Note,—See Lossing's History of the War of 1812. The author. an American. makes some severe remarks on the “cowardice” of the militia On this occasion.

At Lewiston, we found the steamer, which soon took us out of the river into Lake Ontario, which we crossed to Toronto, (forty-two miles), arriving in a truly 12 British rain and fog, but having the good fortune to find there the Governor-General of The Dominion, the Earl of Dufferin, and his Countess, to each of whom we had letters of introduction, and to whom we were indebted for a very pleasant evening on the day of our arrival. Lord and Lady Dufferin are deservedly popular throughout Canada, and are, in every respect, representatives of his country of whom an Englishman may feel proud.

II.

Toronto, the capital of the Province of Ontario, in the Dominion of Canada, is a large and thriving place, built in the usual American style, with wide, ill-kept streets, crossing each other at right angles, and planted at the sides with trees. The town stands upon what is nearly a dead flat, for it is not on the shores of the great lakes of North America, that we must look for picturesque scenery; and except a cathedral and a university it seems to have no public buildings of importance. A large proportion of the inhabtiants are of Scotch and 13 Northern Irish birth or extraction, and the Province of Ontario has, I believe, but few French Canadians, and still fewer Germans within its limits. Settlers of the latter nation abound, as is well known, in many parts of the United States, and are said to number

upwards of three hundred thousand in the city of New York alone. The wages of a working man are considerably lower in the Province of Ontario than in the adjoining State of New York, where a man will get three-and-a-half dollars per day, against two dollars on the Canadian side.

As Canada, however, does not possess a depreciated paper currency, and the cost of lodging, clothing, and food is greater on the United States side, this will probably reduce the difference to one-fourth in favour of wages in the States, but this is quite sufficient to cause a large drain of able-bodied labour from Canada into the neighbouring Republic.

We left Toronto on the evening of October 18th, and not being able to procure places in a Pullman sleeping-car, passed a rather uncomfortable night, for the ordinary American railway cars, though arranged on a different plan, 14 are scarcely superior in comfort to second-class carriages in England.

Had it been earlier in the season, we should have much preferred taking the steamer, and enjoying the excitement of descending the rapids, and navigating among “ the thousand islands” of the St. Lawrence. Shortly before reaching Montreal, and after thirteen or fourteen hours jolting along that roughest of railways, the Grand Trunk of Canada, we crossed the main branch of the Ottawa river. Nothing can give an Englishman a better idea of the great rivers of North America than this junction of the Ottawa with the St. Lawrence, each of these gigantic streams being here *miles* in width, and this at a distance of more than seven hundred miles from the sea! Montreal is a well-built and flourishing city of one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, nearly two thirds of whom are French Canadians. The mountain from which the town derives its name, is an abrupt and thickly-wooded hill, on the slope of which are some handsome private villas, and near the summit is a cemetery. The navigation of the St. Lawrence for ocean steamers ends here, on account of the rapids between 15 Montreal and Kingston. Between Montreal and Quebec, the chief obstacle is the shallowness of the Lake of St. Peter, where the river spreads out to a great breadth. After spending three or four days very pleasantly at Montreal, and enjoying the

kindness and hospitality of the brother of one of our Northumbrian baronets, we embarked for Quebec on the evening of Oct. 21st.

The American steamers are vastly superior, both in size and comfort, to anything we possess for river navigation in England, and I can only wonder why similar steamboats have never been introduced upon our larger rivers, such as the Thames and the Clyde, where it seems to me they would answer perfectly well.

Early next morning we were at the landing place at Quebec, and I could have imagined myself transported during the night across the Atlantic, and set down in some old provincial town in the west of France. The steep, narrow, crooked, and dirty streets; the houses, the churches, the people—all were more or less French.

Three-fourths of the people of Quebec speak French as their native tongue though 16 many of them can also express themselves well in English, but in the surrounding villages, I believe, very little English is even understood* .

* Note.—The business of the Courts of Law in Montreal and Quebec is conducted both in French and English, which has an odd effect.

On the day of our arrival we drove to the Falls of Montmorency, eight miles over a capital turnpike road, which formed an agreeable contrast to the mud and holes of the streets of Quebec. The houses of the *habitants* , as the French Canadian peasants are termed, lined the road for the greater part of the way, and though small, were neatly painted, and all built of wood. Their land, which is, I understand, yearly becoming more subdivided, lies in narrow strips back from the river, and as far as I could judge, seemed to be but poorly cultivated.

The Falls of Montmorency are actually a good deal higher than those of Niagara; it is the body of water that makes the difference, for the Montmorency would not, even in England,

be called a large river; the whole scene is, however, wild and singular, though scarcely beautiful.

17

On our return to Quebec we saw the Citadel, now tenanted only by a few Canadian artillerymen, and then proceeded to the Plains of Abraham. The spot where “Wolfe fell victorious” is marked by a monument in tolerable taste, but its effect is marred by a huge prison which has lately been erected close by. There is another place marked only by an inscription on the rock above, and situated in a street near the St. Lawrence, which I looked at with interest, for it was here that on the 30th of December, 1775, General Richard Montgomery, at the head of an army of American insurgents, whom he was leading in column to the assault, was shot dead by a rifle ball from the Citadel, which, as well as the town, was most gallantly defended by General Carleton. Montgomery's troops retreated in confusion, leaving the body of their brave leader on the snow, whence it was brought into Quebec by the besieged, and laid out in a house which still exists. Montgomery was a man of good family, and considerable landed property on the Hudson River, about 100 miles above New York City. His house, which his widow inhabited for fifty years 18 after his death, and which Mrs. L—kindly took us to see, is beautifully situated, and with grounds both extensive and kept in good order, the latter being a rare thing in America.

Thus failed, ninety-seven years since, the daring attempt of the Americans to gain possession of Canada, for though their army under Benedict Arnold, who afterwards betrayed the cause he had espoused, passed the remainder of the winter before Quebec, the British vessels forced their way through the ice of the St. Lawrence early in the spring, relieved the garrison, and compelled Arnold, though one of the ablest of the revolutionary soldiers, to make a disastrous retreat in the direction of Lake Champlain. It is singular how this hankering after Canada has possessed the minds of the people of the United States ever since they became a separate nation, and ceased to speak of England as “home.” The United States Constitution of 1787 contains provisions for the admission of Canada

into the Union; the conquest of Canada was one of the chief objects of the Americans in the war of 1812, and the same spirit was shown in their sympathy 19 with the Rebellion of 1838, and with the Fenian raids of a few years back.

Yet, in spite of all this, I doubt whether, since the time when we wrested Canada from the French, that country was ever so loyal to the British Crown, or so little disposed to “annexation” with the States, as at the present day.

The situation of Quebec is singularly picturesque, and resembles that of Stirling in Scotland, if we leave out the St. Lawrence altogether, and suppose the River St. Charles to represent the Forth. Besides the drive to Montmorency, there is that to Lorette, a village inhabited by a colony of *civilised* Indians, the last remnant of the once powerful tribe of the Hurons. The Chief, who bore the name of Paul, and spoke excellent French, had a piano in his house for the use of his daughter, who had been educated at the Ursuline Convent at Quebec. The St. Louis and St. Foye roads are delightful, and bordered with villas in the English style. The chief defect of Quebec must be its climate, for though situated in the latitude of Lyons, in France, it has a truly Russian winter, with intense frost and deep 20 snow, and a river navigation closed by ice for four or five months out of the twelve, during which time all direct communication with Europe must come through Portland, in the United States. At Montreal, which is further south, Mr M—told me that he had seen the thermometer at 29 degrees below zero! The Canadians have, however, a far more robust and healthy look than their Yankee neighbours, though I fear the former are more addicted to intemperance in drink. In the States sobriety seems to be the rule in all public places, where little else but iced water is generally to be seen. Some thirty or forty miles north of Quebec begins the unbroken wilderness, where one may wander hundreds of miles through forests without meeting a human being, and seldom even a quadruped or a bird. Indeed, the rarity of wild animals is remarkable in all parts of America that I have seen. There are no rooks, no larks, no sparrows, except a few of the last that have lately been introduced into some of the great towns from England, and perhaps our farmers may be glad to learn—no *rabbits* * . Grey

* Note.—The so-called American rabbit is in reality a small hare, which possesses neither the burrowing habits nor the reproductive powers of its namesake in the Old World. The early English settlers in North America were not happy in naming the animals and plants they found there. They called a Bison, a Buffalo; a Vulture, a Turkey Buzzard; an Elk, a Moose; a large species of deer (the Wapiti), an Elk; a Thrush, a Robin; and a Spruce Fir, a Hemlook; but the greatest misnomer of all unquestionably originated with Columbus himself, who lived and died in the belief that the land he had discovered was a part of India and therefore named it The Indies, and Its Inhabitants Indians!

21 squirrels are seen hanging up in the markets beside the grouse and so-called partridges, the latter being the more common, and in my opinion a dry, tasteless bird. Both the prairie chicken and the so-called pheasant are species of grouse, and the quail differs from that of Europe. Butchers' meat in the cities is nearly as dear as with us, and of worse quality, particularly as regards mutton. The hotels in Canada that I have seen are inferior in comfort to those of the States, though conducted on the same plan. The cookery in both countries is nearly equally bad, though exceedingly pretentious. Tea and coffee are alike execrable, and good wine and beer extremely dear. The sea fish is not equal to ours, and the oysters, though very large, are insipid to the taste of a European, though the Americans complain that our oysters taste of *copper.* We left Quebec, where, as usual, our introductions had procured us a most hospitable reception, and enabled us in American phrase “ to have a good time,” on 22 the 24th of October, travelling by rail, and in a Pullman sleeping car, an admirable invention which, like the American river steamers, might be advantageously introduced on our side of the Atlantic. To reach the railway, the St. Lawrence, here at one of its narrowest points and *only a mile wide* , has to becrossed to Point Levi, whence then line follows the right bank of the river. Morning showed us the country covered with hoar frost, and after passing the great tubular bridge, which owes its existence to Robert Stephenson, the Northumbrian, we found ourselves again in Montreal, where we remained till the evening of the 26th, and then took our places, amid heavy rain, in the cars for Boston.

Up to Lake Champlain the country is flat and uninteresting. There are the usual ugly rail or snake fences, with here and there a field of cabbages, or one with (Indian) corn-stalks, which are used as fodder for cattle, put up in sheaves, and pumpkins, looking like gigantic oranges, lying scattered on the ground between them. At St. Alban's we had once more to encounter a United States Custom House Officer, who searched some of our luggage pretty closely, as smuggling, particularly by 23 ladies, is said to be but too common from Canada into the States. Soon after leaving St. Alban's we entered a far more picturesque country in the State of Vermont. The railway winds for fifty or sixty miles among rocky and thickly wooded hills, through valleys that seem to be rich, and along streams which ought to be the paradise of the trout fisher. The villages at which the train stopped were universally handsome and well built, with nothing in the shape of shabby cottages, nearly all the houses having an upper floor, and looking bright with fresh paint. The most conspicuous buildings were everywhere the church and the schoolhouse, the latter being often very large. I cannot, however, give so good a report of what I saw of the population, of which the male portion were lean, sallow, and unhealthy looking, with countenances by no means wanting in shrewdness, but generally the reverse of agreeable.

At White River junction we crossed the Connecticut river, and entered the State of New Hampshire, where the scenery had a less romantic character. Night set in long before we entered the State of Massachusetts, but I could 24 see that we were passing through a populous and manufacturing district till we reached Boston at 10·30 p.m., and found, that owing to the prevalence of the horse disease, not a cab, cart, or even a wheelbarrow was to be had at the station, so entrusting the more portable part of our baggage to some boys, we trudged through the wet and deserted streets to our hotel.

III.

We remained at Boston only five days. This city, which shortly after our departure, suffered from a fire second only in its disastrous effects to that of Chicago, was by far the most *English* looking town I had yet seen in America. The older portions of Boston seem to

have been modelled after the City of London, and Beacon Street and The Common are almost fac-similes of our Piccadilly and Green Park. In the Public Garden adjoining the Common, is a fine bronze equestrian statue of General Washington, by Ball. I mention this, because as far as I have seen, Washington, like some great men in our own country, has not, generally speaking, 25 been fortunate in the statues erected to his memory. As it was the eve of the Presidential election, politics, as might have been expected, ran pretty high at Boston during our stay. Judge R—, to whom I had a letter of introduction, kindly invited me to accompany him one evening to a political meeting at a small town called Waltham, about ten miles from Boston, and chiefly inhabited by watchmakers.

The meeting was held in the public room, which was well filled, several ladies being among the audience. Judge R—has deservedly the reputation of being aa excellent speaker, and the art of oratory is much more cultivated on his side of the Atlantic than on ours. He spoke for nearly an hour and a half in favour of General Grant and the Republican party, and apart from some rather crude ideas of political economy, which find favour in the New England States, I thought his discourse an able one. Of course we were treated to a little about “The Star-spangled Banner” and its triumphs over the British flag; but without some garnish of this kind, I presume no American can political oration would be considered as complete.

26

There was a slight show of disapproval from some members of the Democratic party at the meeting, but this was speedily put down, and the *cheering* was performed in the genuine British style.

Cambridge, which contains Harvard University, is almost a suburb of Boston. The situation of Cambridge, though on a dead flat, is ornamented by some fine trees, one of which, a magnificent elm, stands close to the house of the poet Longfellow.*

* Note.—The American Elm. with its pendant branches, is a more graceful tree than ours.

The University buildings, with the exception of a “Memorial Hall,” which is yet unfinished, have nothing remarkable about them, and the students wear no academical dress whatever.

On the evening before we left Boston, we witnessed, from the house of a Senator, a grand torchlight procession in honour of Grant and Wilson. The Republicans mustered about ten thousand strong, and as they marched past in companies carrying various flags and devices, and each man bearing a kind of torch, the effect was very good indeed, though owing 27 to the prevalence of the horse-disease, none of the noble quadrupeds could take part in the show. Among other devices was a full-rigged ship, mounted on wheels, and manned by a crew of ten or a dozen men. Having often heard of this ship before, as being a prominent feature in processions at Boston, I remarked to an American gentleman that I supposed it represented the mercantile marine of the United States. He said that it was intended to do so, and turning to his neighbour, added, “I think they had better have left that out, for our mercantile marine has been dead for some time.”

This is an unfortunate fact, into the causes of which it is unnecessary now to enter, but the “Meteor Flag of England” seems to have at present nearly driven the “Stars and Stripes” from the ocean.

We left Boston on the morning of the 31st October, and after passing through an undulating and wooded country, and latterly obtaining beautiful views of Long Island Sound, we arrived at New York before sunset.

The eighteen days we remained in New York were passed very pleasantly in the hospitable house of an American lady, whose acquaintance, 28 and that of her mother and daughter we had the good fortune to make on board the “Russia.” On the 2nd of November I witnessed the inauguration of a statue of Sir Walter Scott, in the Central Park The day was very fine, quite worthy of the Indian summer, and the statue, which, if not a copy, strongly resembled that in the Scott monument at Edinburgh, was unveiled in the

presence of some hundreds of well-dressed people The principal speaker was William, Cullen Bryant, the poet, a fine-looking old man with a white beard, who spoke with much energy, and was decorated with *heather* , a plant, by-the-bye, which does not grow on the North American continent. There was, however, very little demonstration of enthusiasm among the audience, but I observed the same apparent coldness afterwards at the theatres. The 5th inst. was the great election day for the Presidency and Vice Presidency of the United States. Those elected will hold office for the term of four years, from the 4th of March next. There was a great crowd, but a very orderly one, in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, in Madison Square, that evening, when the votes in the various States 29 of the Union were exhibited, by a sort of magic lantern apparatus, as fast as they arrived by telegraph; the Californian returns having been transmitted over something like three thousand miles of wire! Grant, for President, and Wilson for Vice-President,* carried the day by an immense majority, and Horace Greeley, who had just previously lost his wife, did not long survive his defeat.

* Note.—The Vice-President of the United States is ex-officeo President of the senate at Washington.

Shortly before leaving New York, I paid a visit to Blackwell's Island, in the East River, which island is wholly occupied by hospitals, workhouses, almshouses, and penitentiaries, and is only accessible through an order from the city authorities. The *Workhouse* , I soon discovered was in reality a sort of *House of Correction* , not for felons, but for those who had been convicted of disorderly conduct or of drunkenness. No one can be committed there for a shorter period than ten days, or for a longer one than six months, and I was surprised to find that persons habitually drunken and disorderly could be sent there by their friends, on application having been first made to the police. Two 30 cases of this sort were pointed out to me, the delinquents being evidently of the educated classes, and the cause of their committals habitual drunkenness; though one was, I regret to add, a young and pretty woman.

The *Almshouse* , which is at a short distance from the *Workhouse* , much resembles our Union Workhouses, and has, I was informed, during the winter months eight hundred or nine hundred inmates, who are supported from the taxes of the City of New York, and who appeared to be extremely well fed and cared for in every respect. A very large proportion of the inmates were of Irish birth, for the native Americans are seldom inclined to avail themselves of charitable relief, or even to serve in a subordinate capacity in any trade or occupation, if they can possibly avoid doing so. Hence in Boston and New York, the domestic servants, the waiters at hotels, the assistants in the shops, the cab drivers, and the labourers of every description are in a very large proportion Irish immigrants. Though generally an industrious, the American-Irish do not seem to be a happy people, but to be painfully conscious of the *social* inferiority to which they are condemned in the United 31 States, except by those politicians whose interest it may be to secure the Irish vote for their own purposes. Many of these Irish immigrants are wholly illiterate; nearly all are more or less disposed to be insolent, and they seem to have left all their native politeness, and much of their wit on the other side of the Atlantic. It may readily be imagined that the American-Irishman has no love for the *Britisher* ; but there is one race that he finds on his arrival here, which he has learned to hate with even more intensity than he does the *Saxon* , and that is—the *Negro* . During what are called the Draft Riots, at New York, in 1863, the city was for the space of four days in the power of an Irish mob, who in spite of the praiseworthy exertions and denunciations of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Hughes, and his clergy, burned the Coloured Orphan Asylum, murdered the negroes, wrecked their houses, and would probably have ended by destroying a great part of the city, but for the advent of the regular troops from New Jersey, who put down this dangerous insurrection in a very summary manner. I was assured on good authority, that on this occasion, many of the domestic servants in New York 32 actually left their employers, joined the rioters, and came back when order was restored, to their old places, their employers not daring to refuse to receive them! It is satisfactory to think, however, that the children of these Irish will cease to be social *pariahs* , and that their grandchildren will be quite

undistinguishable from the mass of the American people, that great English-speaking race, which is gradually but surely absorbing all other nationalities within its vast territory.

It has long been the fashion with certain “unco guid” persons in this country to speak of the Americans as “a Godless people.” Everybody knows that the United States do not possess the blessing (?) of an Established Church, and that all religions are there on the voluntary system, and on a footing of perfect equality. This voluntary system appears, however, to work well, as the number of churches of various denominations in New York seems considerably to exceed in proportion that of most of the large towns of Great Britain. The Sunday, too, is quite as strictly observed as in England, and perhaps no one but an *ultra* -Puritan would be disposed to 33 quarrel with the display of beauty and fashion which Fifth Avenue, in New York, exhibits after morning service on that day. I should have been surprised, however, to find the odious system of *pews* prevailing even in the *Catholic* churches in the States, had I not previously seen the same thing in Montreal and Quebec, where one would have supposed that French traditions would have led to the adoption of a better taste. The Catholic Cathedral of St. Patrick, in Fifth Avenue, New York, will, when completed, probably be the finest church in the United States. It is built entirely of white marble, like the Duomo of Milan, and I was informed that owing to some ingenious management on the part of the then governing authorities, the land for its site was obtained at the easy cost of *one dollar* per acre! With regard to *crime* , it would, perhaps, be difficult to arrive at its real statistics in a city like New York of nearly a million and a half of inhabitants, and which has been for many years past constantly fed by an influx of the off scourings of Europe. One of the worst features of society in the United States is that there is little or no value placed upon human life, and that the constant 34 practice, even among the better classes, of carrying loaded fire-arms about their persons is but too likely, in the event of a casual quarrel, to lead to the employment of a *revolver* or a *Deringer* to settle the “difficulty.” But notwithstanding these irregularites, the streets of New York generally, in respect of the display of drunkenness and profligacy, bear a very advantageous comparison with those of London or of Liverpool.

In this Republican country it was difficult to suppress a smile at seeing, in the same building as the City Library, a window bearing the words, “New York College of Heraldry,” in splendidly illuminated characters, and on making enquiry within, I found that I could be accommodated with a coat of arms, and possibly with a pedigree. The love of *title* seems to be stronger in this country than even in ours, for not only is an English nobleman an object of unbounded adoration, especially with the fairer portion of the community, but almost every second American you meet in society is a General, a Colonel, or a Judge, and the veriest New York “rowdy” will expect to be addressed as “Boss” or “Cap,” before he condescends 35 to nod or shake his head in answer to your question.* One of the great drawbacks to New York is the want of means of locomotion. The cabs, or “Hacks,” are generally neat Broughams, but they are not numerous, drive slower than our London cabs, and will not stir a step under a dollar and a quarter—5s. Unless, therefore, you prefer to walk, which few Americans will do if they can avoid it, you are obliged to take the cars, which are drawn by horse power on tramroads, in some of the principal streets, but are generally overcrowded, and a favourite resort for pickpockets. Coloured people are now admitted into these cars, which was not the case before the late Civil War, and this does not render travelling by them more agreeable.

* Note.—“Boss”is from the Dutch word “Baas,” which means “Master” or “Employer.” The English word “Master” is eschewed by the citizen of the United States as savouring of “servility.” “Cap” is merely an abbreviation of “Captain.”

The weather became cold before we left New York; on the 16th November about two inches of snow fell, followed by a severe frost, which withered all the remaining flowers, and sent the few leaves which still lingered on the trees to the ground.

36

The system of warming the houses by “furnaces,” which are placed below, and supply hot air and hot water to the topmost story, is very effective and economical, but the rooms are overheated, and not well ventilated, and I cannot believe such an atmosphere to be

wholesome. Certain it is, that the Americans of the Eastern States at least, are far from possessing either the active habits or the robust health of the English, while in the small number of children in their families they may be said to rival the French.

We left New York on the 18th inst., and the day, though frosty, being clear and bright, we saw the country well as long as daylight lasted. After the ferry over the Hudson, the railway passes through swampy, low land, in New Jersey, but the scenery improves when you cross the Delaware at Trenton, and still more so at the Schuylkill, near Philadelphia, of which city we had a good view, but did not pass through its streets, as we afterwards did through those of Baltimore, where the cars were dragged by horses. The long bridge over the great river Susquehanna was traversed in the dark, and we reached Washington 37 at 10 p.m., having travelled by express train, and performed 226 miles in nine hours.

IV.

To be the capital of a great country it must be owned that Washington is an extraordinary looking place.

It has no trade, and the Potomac, on whose banks it stands, though a tidal river, is only navigable for vessels of light draught.

The climate being excessively hot in summer, and often very cold and windy in winter, the streets have been *judiciously* laid out in straight lines, and with an enormous breadth, so as to secure to passengers the full benefit of wind, dust, mud, and a burning sun, according to the season. As regards the mud, however, I am bound to add that very great efforts were being made at the time of our visit, by the employment of a host of negroes, to pave and asphalte the streets, so that in another year or so, a drive through Washington may be a pleasure instead of a punishment. These improvements unfortunately have had the effect of 38 more than doubling the city taxation, which is still, I believe, on the increase.

The houses which border these wide streets, are, with the exception of the public buildings, and of some few private houses, of the meanest description, being inferior to those of a secondrate provincial town in England. The same observations will apply to the shops, or *stores* as they are universally called in America. Their prices are at least, double what they would be with us, and their goods generally of inferior quality.

The city, which, with its far more picturesque suburb of Georgetown, contains about one hundred thousand inhabitants, has no theatre worthy of the name,* and no public drive or promenade. Having gone thus far in the way of depreciation, it will be only fair to state what may be said in the way of approval. The Capitol is a truly magnificent building. Placed, as it is, on the highest ground in the city, its lofty dome and walls of white marble form a conspicuous object from afar, and the impression of its grandeur is not

* Note.—The wretched apology for a theatre, dignified by the name of “National.” was burnt down during our stay at Washington in the following January.

39 diminished by a nearer view, though its architecture cannot be termed absolutely faultless. The finer front is unfortunately that which is turned *from* the city, and looks to the eastward.

For the groups of statuary near the principal entrance much cannot be said, but the bronze doors which bear the history of Columbus are worthy of all praise. The Central Hall, under the Dome, contains several large pictures, the most interesting of which, though below criticism in point of art, are four by Colonel Trumbull, representing the Adoption of the Declaration of Independence; the Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga; that of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown; and Washington resigning his command of the army before Congress. Trumbull was an amateur artist, and a brother soldier of Washington. The Capitol contains both the Hall of the Senate, and that of the House of Representatives, and as Congress met for the first time after the recess on December 2nd, we did not neglect to be present on that occasion. The two Houses are constructed in the *semi-circular* plan, which seems to find favour in all countries excepting our 40

own for Parliamentary purposes. Both Senators and Representatives are much better accommodated than our own Lords or Commons, each member having a comfortable arm chair, and a desk in which he can keep his books and papers, and upon which, in American fashion, he can occasionally rest his feet. Both houses were warmed with hot air to a temperature of about 70 degrees, an atmosphere stifling to most Europeans, and which cannot be wholesome for the members themselves. The proceedings in the Senate were opened by an extempore prayer from the chaplain, who was, I believe, an Episcopalian; after which business began without any further ceremony. A new Senator having to be sworn in, he came up arm-in-arm with his colleague, for each State, big or little, returns *two* Senators, and the oath was administered by the Vice-President, who is ex-officio President of the Senate, Mr Schuyler Colfax,* the right hand being held up while the oath was taken, but there was no kissing of

* Note.—This gentleman subsequently got into trouble in connection with the Credit Mobilier scandal. but escaped a vote of cessure in the Senate. His term of office ceased on the 4th of March, 1873, and he has since, I believe, retired into private life. It should not be forgotten, that in 1867, being then Speaker of the House of Representatives at Washington, he publicly received in his official capacity, a deputation of “Fenians,” headed by a man named Roberts, who styled himself “President of the Irish Republic.”

41 the Book. Then followed the President's message, the reading of which, by one of the clerks of the Senate, occupied about an hour and a quarter. It was very well and distinctly read, in spite of some peculiarities of accentation, such as “énquiry” and “devástating.” The appearance and conduct of the Senators was, on the whole, not undignified, but the same could not be said of the members of the House of Representatives, who behaved like a set of unruly schoolboys, whom the Speaker, Mr Blaine, was doing his best, but not very effectually, to keep in order. It was impossible not to be struck with the *juvenile* appearance of the great majority of the members of both Houses. Few of them seemed to have passed the limit of middle-age; probably the well-known precocity of the American youth causes the older men to be laid on the shelf at a period of life when they would

be thought most useful in Europe. It is unpleasant to be obliged to close this account of a visit to the Capitol with the remark that its 42 corridors and staircases of white marble bore unmistakeable traces of the tobacco-chewing propensities of the citizens of the great Republic, most of whom had evidently disdained to avail themselves of the nearly omnipresent spittoon. A few days before the meeting of Congress, we had the honour of being introduced by our minister, Sir Edward Thornton, to President Grant. The “White House” where he resides, is a building without much pretension, and in the style of architecture which prevailed in England for country houses at the close of the last, and the beginning of the present century. The grounds in front are small, kept in only rough order, and quite open to the public. President Grant is a short, stout-built man, seemingly about fifty years of age, with an intelligent eye, and a resolute expression about the mouth and chin. His manners, though plain and simple, were not, I thought, devoid of dignity, and though he is well-known to be no orator, and to be often rather taciturn as regards conversation, on this occasion he talked a good deal, and talked well. He spoke of California, and of the projests which were on foot for establishing more 43 lines of railway communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific; he also said a few words respecting Horace Greeley's candidature and defeat for the Presidency, expressing his surprise that Mr. G. should have thrown himself into the arms of a party, to which, during his long career as a journalist, he had been bitterly opposed.

Mr Greeley has since died, and there can be but one opinion as to the generous feeling which brought General Grant to New York, to attend the funeral of his late opponent. Mrs Grant, with whom was her daughter, Miss Nellie, did the honours to the ladies of our party in a very amiable and unaffected manner.

But to return to the public buildings at Washington. The Treasury, the Post Office, and the Patent Office, are fine buildings, in which marble and granite have been largely used with that massive simplicity so suitable to what we term Greek architecture. One very remarkable feature in the Treasury and the Post Office was the number of *women* employed in the various departments. Many of these, I was given to understand, were the

widows or relatives of Federal soldiers who had fallen 44 during the Civil War; they receive a smaller remuneration for their services than the male employees, but I could not learn whether they were considered to be equally efficient. The management of the Post Office in America is far behind that of our own, particularly as regards the *delivery* . Newspapers which arrive with letters, are always delivered much later; often not until the next day.
A tall, square tower, which I at first took for a *lighthouse* , turned out to bean unfinished monument to the memory of George Washington, begun a quarter of a century ago, and which had better now be left alone, or better still, pulled down altogether, and the materials employed to make the muddy banks of the Potomac more accessible from the city. It is difficult to imagine anything in more atrocious taste than this “obelisk.” The Smithsonian Institution, derived from funds bequeathed many years ago by an Englishman, is a strange medley of medieval and renaissance architecture. It has extensive grounds attached to it, and contains a tolerably large, but ill-arranged collection of objects of Natural History in badly lighted rooms. I may here remark, that as far as I have observed, 45 the study of Natural History, so passionately pursued by many of our countrymen, finds but small favour among our American cousins as individuals, though the surveys and reports published by their Government are admirable in this respect both from the fullness of the information they contain, and the drawings with which they are copiously illustrated.

Nearly one-half of the population of Washington seem to be either downright blacks, or to bear evident marks of negro blood. When we remember, that up to a very few years back, slavery was one of the cherished institutions of the district of Columbia, of which Washington is the capital; that the majority of these coloured people were born slaves, and that it was very rarely that slaves were taught to read, we may imagine the amount of ignorance that prevails among a race who have for some time past been in possession of the elective franchise. Indeed, I am inclined to believe, that in most of the *Southern* States of the Union, education, including even that of a large portion of the *white* population, is at a lower ebb than in any part of Great Britain or Ireland at the present day. We took leave of our friends in 46 Washington on the 6th December, intending to embark for England

after a very few days' stay in New York. Circumstances, however, induced us to alter our intention, and to remain in New York till after Christmas day, returning to Washington for its gay season, which begins with the New Year and lasts till Lent, being thus identical with the *Carnival* time of Continental Europe.

V.

We were now destined to see something of an American winter, my experience of which would not induce me again to choose that season for a visit to the country. From the 10th of December the frost at New York was of more continued severity than I ever felt in Europe. On Christmas Day, Fahrenheit's thermometer fell to 5 degrees above Zero, and in the evening a violent snowstorm came on from the north-east, lasting for nearly twenty-four hours, the snow being upwards of two feet deep on the level in the streets, and the temperature never rising to more than 9 degrees above Zero.

There was, of course, plenty of sleighing in the Central Park the day after this heavy snowfall; hundreds of “carrioles,” “cutters,” &c., being drawn by the fast American trotters, and thousands of sleigh-bells ringing in the sharp, clear air. In the streets, however, matters were not quite so pleasant, many of the narrower ones being blocked up by the snow, some of which had not entirely disappeared when we returned to New York early in February. And yet this city is in the latitude of Naples!

Let no intending emigrant to the United States or Canada allow himself to be deceived by false statements regarding their climate, which is *much* worse in almost every respect than that of corresponding latitudes in Europe. Washington lies nearly as far to the south as Palermo, in Sicily, where frost and snow are unknown, where flowers bloom all the winter through, while the orange and lemon trees are laden with their golden fruit.*

* Note.—The mean temperature at Washington for the month of January, 1873, was 31°.7. The highest Temperature was 64½° on the 16th inst., the lowest 6 degrees below Zero on the 30th. Washington, N. Lat. 38 deg. 53 min. Palermo 38 deg. 8 min.

48

We again left New York for Washington on the 28th December, the Hudson at the ferry being full of floating ice, and all the other rivers we crossed being solidly frozen. I shall not readily forget the discomfort of this journey. Not a “Pullman” or a “Chair” car being forthcoming, we were forced to take our places in one of the ordinary cars, of which most of the occupants passed their time either in peeling apples, or expectorating tobacco on the floor. The whole country was covered with deep snow, and the temperature many degrees below freezing, but the stoves in our car refused to burn, though we remained in it as long as we could, preferring the chance of being frozen to that of being suffocated. It is, perhaps, needless to add that all the Americans deserted us as soon as the fires went out, and went into the next car. At last the “conductor” (guard) “guessed” that he would “cut off” our car, so we moved into the next, but had not been there five minutes before he guessed that must be cat off too, and then we, with the rest of our fellow-passengers in the second car were crowded into a third, in a manner which overcame even the well-known 49 submissiveness of Americans when travelling in their own country, and occasioned a display of ill-humour, accompanied in one instance with a resort to blows. How such an utter want of arrangement on one of the great railroad lines of the United States, and one connecting their largest city with their Federal capital, could take place was a mystery. It was past eleven at night ere we reached Wormley's Hotel, at Washington, having left New York at 1 p.m. The proprietor of the hotel, which, by the way, is a very good one, is a man of colour, who was formerly a slave, but having been a *house* servant, with white blood in his veins, had been educated, and had the manners of a gentleman. The waiters and chamber maids were, almost without exception, “full-blooded” negroes. From what I saw in America, however, I am inclined to prefer negroes to white men as waiters. The former, though rather slow, are quiet in their movements, and seldom awkward; add to which, they

are generally good-humoured and civil. Among other delicacies to be found at this hotel were the celebrated canvas-back ducks, which are not considered good till they have fed upon the wild celery which grows in 50 abundance in the lower reaches of the Potomac. There was also terrapin soup, the terrapin being a small water tortoise, which would be better if it had fewer small bones, that certainly do not improve the soup, which is rich and dark coloured.

Though there is very little keeping of Christmas in our sense of the word, New Year's Day is a great day all over the United States, and was duly celebrated at Washington by the ladies of every family receiving their male friends and acquaintances; some of these gentlemen, I was informed, having made upwards of one hundred calls during the day! These calls consist of a shake of the hand, a few words hurriedly spoken; sometimes, but not always, a glass of wine, egg-nog,* lemonade, or an ice taken at the table, and then a departure to make a similar call elsewhere. The custom must be a tiresome one to all the parties concerned, but such is the *social* tyranny that prevails in this country, that no one has yet had the courage to lift up his voice against it.

* Note.—Egg-nog is a rather nauseous mixture of rum, eggs, milk, and sugar, served hot in a soup tureen.

51

Congress met again on the 6th inst., but the proceedings were not of much interest, with the exception of an investigation respecting the disposal of certain shares in the Credit Mobilier and Union Pacific Railway; which enquiry subsequently revealed a degree of corruption among some members of the Senate and House of Representatives, that in England is now happily unknown, though it seems lately to have met with something like a parallel in Canada.

On a clear, frosty day, early in January, we paid a visit to Arlington Cemetery, on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Crossing that river from George Town, by a bridge at which

a toll was exacted, we found ourselves immediately in a woody country, which must, in the fine season, be very picturesque, but over which, owing to the snow, which, after a partial thaw, had frozen on the surface, our progress on foot was not a very easy one.

Arlington House, with the extensive grounds belonging to it, stands in a noble situation to the south-west of Washington, and overlooks that city and the broad surface of its then frozen river. It was, up to the 52 time of the Civil War, the property of Robert Lee, beyond dispute the ablest of the Confederate Generals, if not the ablest who held command on either side during the war. Lee was a man of spotless character, and a true patriot, in his own acceptation of the word; but he was imbued with the mischievous doctrine of *State Rights* , a doctrine which had previously had the support of some of the most eminent statesmen of the Union; and when the war broke out, he decided to throw in his lot with that of his native State of Virginia. It seems a cruel irony to have selected land that was once his, and which he had inherited from a connection of George Washington, as a place of sepulture for the soldiers who fell during the Civil War. The grounds are covered with grave-stones, and in one spot alone are interred the bones of some thousands of men, brought from distant battle fields. The house, a large and substantial one, is empty and desolate. One could not help reflecting on the miseries of a Civil War, which, strange to say, few or none of the many able foreign writers on the United States seem to have anticipated,‡

‡ Note.—Including, among others, Alexis de Tocqueville.

53 and feeling thankful that for the last two centuries and a quarter our own country had been virtually spared from such a scourge. It may not here be out of place to say a word about the periodical press of America. A few of the political, and most of the literary and scientific journals are respectably written, but of the great mass of ordinary newspapers it may be said that personalities, scurrility, bad English, and sensation headings are their principal characteristics. What would be thought in England if one of the leading journals of London filled its columns with the details not only of a prizefight, but of a *cock* fight, and

even of a *dog* -fight? Yet this is quite a general practice with some of the leading journals of New York.

Washington was now in the height of its gay season. Receptions, balls, and “Germans” were the order of the day and night. A “German” is simply a cotillon, and when that is performed no other dance is allowed. *Square* dances, with the rare exception of “The Lancers,” are never seen, and the mode of waltzing, though not ungraceful has a slowness and solemnity about it which must astonish 54 most Europeans. Having entered upon this topic, it would be ungracious not to say a few words regarding the American ladies. Here it is the *daughter* , not the *mother* , who takes the lead in society, who receives her friends, male and female, as often as she pleases at her home, whose friendships and attachments are seldom interfered with by her parents, and who, in the important matter of marriage, has the most perfect liberty of choice. At the risk of being thought unpatriotic, I must say that I prefer the American fashion of intercourse between young persons of both sexes to our own, and I believe that as the young people in that country are pretty sure to know each other before marriage better than they could possibly do in England, unhappy marriages are less common on their side of the Atlantic than on ours. Though too often delicate in health, the American women of the upper class are pretty, graceful, and thoroughly unaffected, with a charm of manner peculiarly their own. They have the good taste, too, to dress in the French fashion, and in New York especially, spare no expense to make their toilettes as perfect as possible.

55

Society in Washington has the advantage of being largely leavened by the members of the various Diplomatic Corps who reside here, and contribute in no small degree to make it agreeable; for the average American *man* , though kind-hearted, shrewd, and possessing a strong sense of humour, is sorely wanting in refinement of language, manners, and ideas; and, while ever vaunting the superiority of his own country to all others upon the

face of the earth, is yet ludicrously sensitive to any criticism a foreigner, and especially an Englishman, may presume to make upon that country or its institutions.

We bade a final adieu to Washington on the 8th of February, and after a stay of four days in New York, we took our leave of the “Empire City” in a snowstorm, which obliged the “Parthia,” After about an hour's steaming, to anchor off Staten Island for the night. After a tedious voyage of 14 days, at the end of which we were again detained for about 12 hours at the entrance of the Mersey, we landed at Liverpool on Feb. 26th, and reached our home in the North on the following morning.

THE END

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